

# Office Hours Explainer

Any support office on campus and every instructor keeps telling you the same thing: go to your instructor's office hours. What does that even entail, though? This guide is your first stop for knowing how to get the most out of your instructor's office hours without worrying about what to say or where to start.

## Define, "Office Hours".

- Office Hours are set timeframes that your instructor has designated in their schedule to meet with students in a specific course
  - I.e., your BIOSCI 150 instructor may have multiple sections of the course; each section has its own office hours assignment
- Some instructors list their Office Hours as “by appointment”--this does not mean that they refuse to meet with their students!
  - It just means that their schedule likely fluctuates from week to week, and thus, it's easier to meet with students on an as-needed basis, rather than set aside the same time period each week

## The Purpose of Office Hours

- To reinforce course concepts in a smaller setting
- To meet with students one-on-one to discuss an assignment, project, or exam
- To review a scoring decision in the course
- To clarify course materials that a student may not have fully understood yet
- To build a rapport with students and destigmatize asking for assistance
- To discuss a catch-up plan after missed coursework or class sessions (typically, this is a topic that would be decided on BEFORE one walks into the office hours themselves)
- To provide students with additional, optional materials for course enrichment (i.e., if you're fascinated by a certain course concept, there's a good chance your instructor may have other articles/places for you to research that topic!)

# Office Hours Explainer, cont.

Keep reading for tips on what questions to ask during office hours, as well as to learn about the benefits of attending them.

## COMMON QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING OFFICE HOURS/ CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Hi \_\_\_\_\_ (Instructor's preferred name), I was wondering if we could potentially discuss the project that's due in a few weeks. I'm having some difficulty getting started. Could you please clarify the requirements for me, again?
- Hi \_\_\_\_\_, I was hoping to get some additional insight on something from yesterday's lecture. I circled a point in my notes from Slide 9 of your powerpoint. Could you please expand on X concept? I don't think I'm fully understanding it yet.
- Hi \_\_\_\_\_, can we please go through problem 6 from the homework? I looked through the solutions, but my answer isn't matching up. Here's the work I did on the problem. Can you please show me where I'm veering off course?
- Hi \_\_\_\_\_! I really enjoyed your anecdote about X. Do you have any additional resources on the topic that you would be willing to point me towards?

## BENEFITS OF ATTENDING OFFICE HOURS

- Answers questions that one may have regarding an assignment, the lecture, or an exam question
- Allows the instructor the chance to know their students as individuals
- Affords students the opportunity to their instructors as people
- Can lead to research projects, internship opportunities, mentorship, and potential letters of recommendation for graduate programs, scholarship, and more
- Develops self-advocacy skills and reinforces that asking for assistance is a vital life skill, rather than a self-perceived weakness (no one on this campus believes that a student asking for assistance is a bad thing!)